To Elizabeth Pease

Boston. 39 Summer Street. January 30. 1845.

GARRISON MSS.

My Dear Friend,

Fatigued as I am I cannot forbear to write you, if only a few lines to say something of the great Massachusetts Convention that has been in session yesterday & to day, called to protest against the Annexation of Texas. It was called by many of the leading men of the State, including Daniel Webster and was held in Faneuil Hall. It was called without distinction of party but all its leading influences & most of its members (exclusive of the Abolitionists) belonged to the Whig or Conservative Party. The Democratic party as a body, under the skilful management of their leaders go for annexation in the most unblushing & shameful manner. There was a little doubt in our minds whether ladies would attend but after having carried anti Texas petitions for half a dozen years through rain & shine we felt disposed to learn what the action of Mass might be by our own by our own observation. We went at 9 o'clock in the morning to Faneuil Hall & found it filling fast. The lower floor was appropriated to the Delegates, each town being permitted to send three times its number of Representatives to the General Court. The same principle determined the number to be sent from the several wards of the city of Boston. One or two hundred ladies were present very good seats having been reserved for them, & very soon the galleries were wedged with deeply interested spectators. You may imagine with what interest we watched the proceedings. In an Anti Slavery Meeting we are behind the curtain. When Garrison or Phillips come forward we know the doctrine they are going to advance or we can pretty well guess the measures they will indicate & long experience enables us to foretell how an audience of Abolitionists will receive that which may be uttered. But here we were much in the dark. The usual preliminaries were gone through, the officers of the meeting appointed. They were not, as they should have been, the leading and distinguished men of the State, at least not the most distinguished. It was curious to see as the hour for action approached how fearful men were to commit themselves. The rich merchants staid away in most instances, & all the young men of the city were as fearful of taking any prominent part as though the meeting had been called to legalize the Slave Trade. One of the aristocratic clergymen however, Dr Parkman, ventured to pray. He is widely pro slavery but he made an Anti Slavery prayer on this occasion & then the Hon Stephen Phillips of Salem (no relative of our Wendell) took the floor.

He is a fine looking man with a manly benign expression of face and a clear, full musical voice. He made a speech of two hours, narrating the perfidy & iniquity of Texas, & the villainy of our Government, descanting particularly on the conduct of Tyler & Calhoun. It was a clear calm exposition of facts, but took no very decided ground though I apprehend this gentleman is as far along as any man not an old organization abolitionist. To him the credit of getting up this Convention is mainly due. He has laboured incessantly and has now very frequently that worn anxious look that marks one who has set in motion some machinery that he is doubtful whether or no he can control. He finished & the meeting adjourned till afternoon. Then the Hall was crowded almost to suffocation for the Convention had invited the members of the Legislature to take seats with them. A very admirable Memorial to the people of the United States was read. It is supposed to be from the pen of Webster. It was thoroughly Anti Slavery in character, full of pointed & pathetic appeals & quoted freely the strongest language that Jefferson & the other men of the Revolution had used in old times in denunciation of Slavery. It was received with thundering applause. Remember that in this very Hall ten years ago, the pro Slavery Meeting was held that responded in a perfectly demoniac spirit to the ferocious outcries of the South and now many of the very men who composed that meeting or sympathized with it cheered sentiments that were almost perfectly identical with those put forth by the Anti Slavery Society before it assumed the watch word of Disunion. The Memorial concluded a most eloquent & indignant protest, but it pointed to no ultimate action in case of annexation. After the memorial was finished Mr Lovejoy of Cambridgeport rose. He is the brother of the murdered Lovejoy, a man of some ability but vulgar both in mind and address, full of clap trap & fond of common place jokes. He is a bitter new organizationist, & will not give a notice of the meetings of our Lecturers. He spoke with freedom, however & shook off the conventional restraints of the meeting more easily than a man of more taste & dignity might have done. He proposed if Texas was annexed that the North should refuse to fulfil the compromises of the Constitution. The third party people cheered and some things that he said on the general question of Slavery received general applause. President Allen (he was formerly President of Bowdoin College in Maine) followed. His speech was so prosy that we could not listen till suddenly we found that in case of Annexation he went for Dissolution then we bestirred ourselves (& by we I mean the Westons, Mr Follen's sister Susan Cabot, & Edmund & Wendell) & the two latter clapped & cheered The President quoted "What constitutes a State" & so forth with m warmth & the meeting adjourned till 7. We did not venture to go home to tea for fear of losing our excellent seats. but we easily passed the short interval away. Mr Hillard a young lawyer (not so very young either) spoke first. The latter part of his speech was beautiful, as much as he portrayed with feeling the horrors of Slavery & showed the audience how little they felt the full significance of the words that indicate the rise & fall of the value of slave products. [As he sat down Garrison rose My heart beat loudly I assure you] my dear Lizzy, for I felt in that great crowd, many of whom must have in time past have been among his bitterest denouncers, it was uncertain how he would be received. No association either in politics or religion have ever accustomed the people of Boston or the state to Garrison. But he was received with cheers long & loud, renewed again & again. [He came forward with his own peculiar calmness & dignity & moved that the Memorial be amended by the Declaration that in case of annexation, Mass withdraws from the Union summons a Convention of the people, & forms a new Government. A good deal of hissing was heard soon drowned by tempests of applause, not so much probably in approbation of the measure as in admiration of the firmness & consistency that made him offer a proposition, so distasteful to the large majority of the assembly. His speech was, as you would expect eloquent & unanswerable. There was nothing of bravado, nothing of denunciation, but a true testimony to the truth in its greatest purity, the truth as held by the American Anti Slavery Society.] One or two men left the meeting, a few cried Shame as the real character of the Constitution was set forth but applause long & loud followed most of his remarks. Stanton followed in such a poor feeble, bombastic vein that I wondered whether he ever had been an eloquent speaker. It must have been a delusion, my ever thinking him so, or he has changed woefully. Now Mr Child of the Senate & Rev. Mr Stetson of Medford spoke the first very prudently & carefully, working hard to still the waves that Garrison had raised, and the latter first saying that it was our duty to dissolve the Union, & then qualifying it, by saying if we thought best. He was like Mr Blattergowl in the Antiquary who drank to Miss Griselda Oldbuck's "inclinations" with the saving clause "provided, Madam, they be virtuous." Then they adjourned till tomorrow. Now you will wonder where was the darling Wendell all the time. Here was Faneuil Hall, here was a great respectable, distinguished auditory such as he never had such an opportunity to address before in this city of Boston & where was he? Alas, he was not a delegate. This was a representative meeting & he lives in the most pro slavery & aristocratic ward in Boston. Garrison lives in a humbler & more democratic section & F. Jackson who is his neighbour laboured for several days, for his election. Wendell was proposed & just failed. Eight men were chosen from that ward & had either declined, Wendell's way was clear, but they were all men who would have made any sacrifice to have kept him out. How we mourned over this you cannot tell, or rather you can tell perfectly. This morning we met again. A Committee of Correspondence was chosen consisting of Judge Allen Mr Phillips, Hon Mr Calhoun (an ex member of Congress) Hon C. F. Adams, (John Quincy Adams' son, a Mr Gray, a Boston gentleman of some political consideration, the Hon Mr Fowler, a leading Democrat, & almost the one one that gave in his adhesion to Anti Annexation principles, almost the only one of any political distinction, & Mr Carter, a 3d party man not possessed of much ability but not of the worst type of that party. A good speech was made by our dear friend S. J. May & very good Anti Slavery speeches, taking into view their authors, were made by the honourables, Messrs Adams, Allen & Child — They took as bold ground as any that we held 4 years ago. — Now let us wait — We have hope that this is the beginning of a movement on the part of the Whig to form a Northern party, based on opposition to Slavery. It may not be so; they may not have the inclination nor the power to do this. Great & enthusiastic as this meeting was, it was produced by the strength of the country. Few of the men of note in Boston gave it their help. The Lawrences, the Appletons & others who lead the great movements stood aloof. The under current of fear & disgust ran strong but it has been kept under. Now it may end we know not but it has now stood before the world in an honourable attitude — if Texas is annexed & she recedes, this convention will be a farce, but if she stands firm the Abolitionists have indeed done their work to good purpose. I wish I could have made this account more vivid, but I am tired, & have not the gift of expression at any time. — Poor dear Rogers! What do you think. He is ill & nervous & we are all grieved at our hearts, but he has disappointed me. I did not think that illness or any thing else could have made him so unmindful of Garrison or so thoughtless of the magnanimity shown by all his best friends. But I have loved him so well that I cannot bear to think of his last six months' developement. It is a severe ordeal through which reformers pass. Their temptation is great to confound Liberty & License — I have not yet had time to read Mr Reid — Wendell took it away during my only leisure week since it came. But I will give you my opinion soon. Do write to me very soon & let your letter be long & full — I have said nothing of our Mass meeting but it was a glorious one. Ever your affectionate Anne W Weston